

Case Study

Government

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Township of Springwater

First-of-its-kind digital records management system saves time and improves relations with Township residents

"Ricoh has been a great partner, and I would recommend them to any municipality looking to digitize their records. Ricoh was there every step of the way, and they're never afraid to take on a challenge. We asked a lot of them, and they delivered the product above and beyond our expectations."

– Karen Way,
Deputy Clerk for the Township of Springwater

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Situated between the City of Barrie and the Town of Wasaga Beach, and just 100 kilometers north of Toronto, the Township of Springwater provides its residents with access to a wide range of cultural and urban events in Ontario. Its enviable location combined with its picturesque countryside and affordable lifestyle earned Springwater a top 100 ranking on the MoneySense best places to live in Canada list. The staff at the Township of Springwater work hard to maintain its positive reputation and the exceptional quality of life of its nearly 20,000 residents.

CHALLENGE

A healthy municipality depends on keeping accurate, detailed records. And while the Township of Springwater was keeping plenty of records, they had a serious problem storing and accessing them.

"Everything was very compartmentalized," explains Karen Way, Deputy Clerk of the Township of Springwater. "I called it our siloes. Each department had their own network drive and filing system, and no other department had easy access to it."

Active records were physically stored in a room above the municipal offices, taking up five filing shelves and growing at an alarming rate. Staff was wasting time searching for files on and off site, and costs were rising. The reliance on physical records and lack of department integration also made it difficult for Township staff to work collaboratively.

"There was a lot of duplication," says Way. "You couldn't easily access or find anything that someone else had been working on, and you never knew when you had the final record or not. It made it very difficult to access final reports after the fact."

CHALLENGE

- Physical records created siloes and interfered with collaboration between departments
- Increased need for file storage space
- Time wasted locating and accessing physical records
- Delayed record delivery to residents and FOI requests harming reputation for transparency

SOLUTION

- Ricoh's Laserfiche document management system completely digitized Township's records
- All historical and current documents scanned and uploaded to single digital location accessible to all departments

RESULTS

- Reduced need for physical file storage space
- Improved collaboration, reduced duplication and eliminated bottlenecks among staff across all departments
- New workflows, forms and search functionality save staff time
- Faster document delivery has improved resident satisfaction and perception of transparency
- First-of-its-kind implementation earned industry recognition for Township staff

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Physical records would occasionally go missing or become delayed when staff members were away on vacation, sometimes sitting on a desk for weeks at a time. And because sifting through paper files was a time-consuming task, any requests for records in storage took a long time to fulfill. While the Township continued to meet legislative deadlines in responding to Freedom of Information Requests or resident inquiries, it wanted to increase turnaround time to improve its reputation for openness and transparency.

SOLUTION

In an effort to digitize their records, the Township of Springwater turned to Ricoh.

"We chose Ricoh because they had the experience with the software we were looking to implement, they had the staff support that we needed, and they took the time to understand our needs," explains Way. "Even though the implementation had never been done before, it wasn't a problem for Ricoh. They were confident they could find a solution to meet our needs."

Leveraging Laserfiche technology, Ricoh digitized the entire records management system for the Township of Springwater. Over the course of the implementation, Ricoh scanned and uploaded every historical and current document that the Township had, and created a single unified record management system that all departments could access.

"Ricoh has been a great partner, and I would recommend them to any municipality looking to digitize their records," says Way. "Ricoh was there every step of the way, and they were never afraid to take on a challenge. We asked a lot of them, and they delivered the product above and beyond our expectations."

RESULTS

Since implementing Ricoh's Laserfiche document management solution, the Township of Springwater has seen a number of improvements for their staff as well as the residents they serve.

With all historical records now digitized, the physical space required to store active documents has been cut nearly in half, and two of the five storage shelves have been removed.

Since all departments can now access a single, digital document, reports are no longer susceptible to duplication errors. This saves staff time from having to check and re-check reports before they go to council, and has eliminated bottlenecks when staff are away for a significant period of time.

"We can now seamlessly and time-efficiently circulate reports between departments and have that one final version without multiple copies," says Way.

The digital records management system has also created new workflows that save staff time. Forms processing for Freedom of Information Requests, for instance, is now available online and search results are available instantly to staff. This has improved relations with residents and boosted the Township's reputation for transparency, as staff can quickly and easily deliver any document requested, right on the spot.

"It has improved the residents' satisfaction," says Way. "When we get phone calls now we don't have to call them back because we have to run and pull a file. Instantly, while the person is explaining what their situation is, you're able to pull that file and respond immediately."

As the first large-scale digital document management solution of its kind, the Township of Springwater has received significant industry recognition for their work: They were asked to present the solution at the Empower Conference in 2012, and they were awarded the Run Smarter award from Laserfiche in 2013.

Looking to the future, Way sees several possible new avenues for the Township to manage their documents even more efficiently using Ricoh's solution:

"We're looking at implementing an accounts payable process so we can circulate invoices digitally, and we're also looking at doing a lot of our licensing and permits through our forms process."

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